

FRESNO WEST SIDE

To clarify the locations of businesses described in this interview, Polk's Fresno City and Fresno County Directory, 1927, published by R.L. Polk and Company, San Francisco, was consulted. The street numbers in brackets are from that directory.

MRS. TAIRA: Today is January 25, 1980. I, Sayoko Taira, am privileged to interview the following people at the Fresno County Public Library: Mr. Nori Masuda, Mrs. Masako Inada, Mrs. Fumi Nakajima, and Mrs. Setsu Hirasuna.

Before we get into the interview proper, I would like to have you give us your full name, place and date of birth, and your place of longest residence.

MRS. HIRASUNA: I, Setsuko Saiki Hirasuna, was born in Fresno on June 17, 1910. I've lived in Fresno all my life except for five years in Mankato, Minnesota (July 1942-November 1947).

MRS. INADA: I, Masako Saito Inada, was born in Fresno on February 19, 1912. I've lived in Fresno all my life except for three years when we were evacuated.

MR. MASUDA: I, Noritake Masuda, was born in Fresno on September 11, 1916. I've lived in Fresno most of my life.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: I, Fumiko Kawai Nakajima, was born in San Francisco on May 4, 1905. I've lived in Fresno most of my life.

MRS. TAIRA: In today's interview, we will try to remember the names and locations of the businesses in West Fresno's Nihonmachi (Japanese community) and to remember what life was like in that community in the late 1920's.

MRS. INADA: Mr. Masuda has made a street map of the section where the Japanese used to live and had their businesses. We called this Japanese town.

MR. MASUDA: We'll start from "G" Street and Inyo. On the west corner was Hamasumi's Garage at [811 "G" Street]. Going up that west side of the street then we have Wakatsu Fujisawa's Hotel [Liberty Hotel, 836 "G" Street], and then was Kebo Cyclery. Next was N. Karukaya's Bath House [851 "G" Street] and then Kamikawa's big store and Hotel Ohta. Continuing to the west corner of Kern Street and "G" Street was Nankaiya, Yamamoto's Laundry [913 "G" Street]. Then we had Yabuno's Grocery Store [919 "G" Street], then Arata's Grocery [923 "G" Street]. Then there was another Japanese laundry Onishi afterwards.

MRS. INADA: Before somebody else was around there.

MR. MASUDA: Then we have reached the next street Tulare. On "G" above Tulare was Tsubota's shoe repair [1003 "G" Street], then there was Uchiyama's laundry [1031 "G" Street]. Then let's come back to Kern Street.

MRS. HIRASUNA: The next street parallel to "G" is China Alley.

MR. MASUDA: Oh, China Alley. Right on the west corner of China Alley and Kern Street there was Sakamoto's Pool Hall [1517 Kern]. Continuing up the southwest side of China Alley then next comes Masuda's store [921 China Alley]. It was a bookstore on China Alley and then Kawai's Restaurant.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: That was a very short time.

MR. MASUDA: Later they moved on to the southeast corner of Tulare and "G" Street. Then there was a Japanese restaurant next to it, Yawata's. Then there was Mr. Nakamura, carpenter, next to it. Across the Alley, opposite Nakamuras, were Kawai's house and a barber [M. Mosaki, barber, 944 China Alley]. Then, continuing on the northeast side of China Alley, there was a Japanese restaurant--Yoshimoto's or Yoshihara's, I forgot the name. And then there was a barbershop right there. I used to get my hair all cut, bozu (short like a Buddhist priest). Next to it, there was H.G. Ego's Meshiya (Japanese restaurant) [956 China Alley]. They are still living there. This China Alley was the busiest street at that time.

MRS. TAIRA: Were there residential places on China Alley?

MR. MASUDA: There was a nagaya, a Japanese style apartment house. Most of the residents were Japanese. Almost all the Japanese were living around here anyway. Then we start up "F" Street. At the east corner of "F" and Kern, where the Aki Shokai is now, there was West Side Garage [1502 Kern]. Across the street, on the north corner, was Tenshodo-Toshiyuki's Drug Store [912 "F" Street or 1501 Kern Street].

MRS. NAKAJIMA: It was called Tenshodo before.

MRS. INADA: Next to it on the northeast side of "F" Street there as Nakamoto's restaurant [914 "F" Street].

MR. MASUDA: Next to the restaurant there is Kogetsu Do [920 "F" Street]. That's still run by Ikedas. They are still selling manju (Japanese sweets). There was Nii's restaurant next to it [926 "F" Street].

MRS. NAKAJIMA: It is closed now.

MRS. INADA: They had a small store before, here between Fagan and "E."

MR. MASUDA: It was a bookstore on the west corner of Kern Street and Fagan Alley. There was a man named Suga [Suga Setsu Books, 423 Kern Street].

MRS. INADA: Then I remember it became Komoto's store.

MR. MASUDA: Oh, that was later--Komotos bought it.

MRS. INADA: They displayed all kinds of groceries at the same store.

MRS. HIRASUNA: That was Komoto's store.

MRS. INADA: Before then it was Kato's, Sumi's.

MRS. HIRASUNA: I remember there was Komoto's bookstore.

MR. MASUDA: Then there was Hori's Pool Hall on the northeast side of "F" Street [between Kern and Tulare, 944 "F"]. It was run by Hori and Murakami. Murakami managed it. At the west corner of Inyo and "F" there was Kamikawa's store, too, at one time. Then they closed it up. Then there was Kimura Soda Manufacture. They delivered all over Central California. Next to it was Harada's grocery store [827 "F" Street]. They were downstairs.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: They used to sell Japanese groceries, pickles.

MR. MASUDA: As you go on "F" toward Kern, there was a building of the Congregational Church. They were teaching Japanese here [841 "F" Street].

MRS. HIRASUNA: Did they use to have a church in front?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Yes.

MRS. INADA: Sure. It was a church in the beginning. Then they had a boarding school.

MRS. HIRASUNA: Yes. The boarding school where all the guys used to stay. They had a Japanese language school downstairs.

MRS. TAIRA: Who stayed at the boarding school?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Students from Japan. They cooked and studied there and went to school.

MRS. HIRASUNA: High school and college.

MRS. INADA: College. There were many men students.

MR. MASUDA: Who was at the south corner of Kern and "F" before Ota?

MRS. INADA: Kataoka.

MRS. HIRASUNA: Who are those Kataokas?

MR. MASUDA: Well, across the street, at the west corner of Kern and "F" was Ito's Dry Goods Store [901 "F" Street].

MRS. HIRASUNA: Yes, that was where my father had a store in 1915 before Itos.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: A bicycle shop.

MR. MASUDA: Saiki Cyclery (Mrs. Hirasuna's father). They were selling bicycles. Next to it was the Home Drug Store [907 "F" Street]. Inside the store, Mr. H.T. Taira was selling watches.

MRS. INADA: He was repairing watches.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: That was later. He was at Tulare before.

MR. MASUDA: Next to Home Drug Store, there was Godain's.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: It was Godain Tailor Shop [915 "F" Street].

MR. MASUDA: There was a theatre at the west corner of Kern and "F," in the Nippon Building. They didn't show movies every day, but maybe once a month. They showed Japanese movies and everybody went there.

MRS. INADA: And they had a program on Tencho-setsu (the emperor's birthday).

MR. MASUDA: Mr. Matsumoto and others used to banzai for the emperor. Then there was Godain's Tailor Shop.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: There was a Tada girl working there who later married Mr. Inouye of the OK Garage.

MR. MASUDA: Then there was Mamoru Tani's father's shoe shop, between the theatre and the tailor shop. Beyond the tailor shop, on the southwest side of "F" Street was Saito's Fish Market [919 "F" Street].

MRS. INADA: Next to it was Ando's Bath House.

MR. MASUDA: Then there was Tanaka's restaurant [935 "F" Street].

MRS. TAIRA: Did they serve Japanese food at restaurants?

EVERYONE: No, western food.

MR. MASUDA: Meshiya (restaurants) served Japanese food. Since this was a restaurant, they served western food. Next to it was Nakai's grocery store [937 "F" Street]. Then Mr. Yamada's barbershop [941 "F" Street].

MRS. INADA: No, a restaurant.

MR. MASUDA: No, that restaurant was Tamura's, wasn't it? [939 "F" Street.]

MRS. INADA: Yamadas used to have a restaurant, too.

MR. MASUDA: Wasn't it a meshiya later?

MRS. INADA: I'm not sure.

MR. MASUDA: Next to it was Mitsuhara's Pool Hall [945 "F" Street], and as I remember there was a Japanese hotel around there. [Y. Mukai, furnished homes, 943 "F" Street.] Mrs. Kimura, who comes to the Buddhist Church now, was there.

MRS. INADA: Is she a granddaughter of Gyobu?

MR. MASUDA: Yes. Next to Mitsuhara's there was Maruko Cyclery [947 "F" Street]. On the south corner of "F" Street and Tulare was Bank of Italy, later changed to Bank of America.

MRS. INADA: There used to be George Studio upstairs. Not this George Studio, but some other George Studio [in bank building, 949 "F" Street].

MRS. NAKAJIMA: The name of the studio was George Studio, but the photographer and proprietor was different, a Mr. Yoshida.

MRS. INADA: Then on top of the bank, on the same floor as George Studio was on, there was a Japanese Association [in bank building, 949 "F" Street].

MR. MASUDA: Yes, I remember Mr. Ono.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Mr. Ono was way later.

MRS. INADA: I remember when we used to have a Japanese students' club. Dr. Taira and I used to go to meetings there. It was a small student group.

MR. MASUDA: That bank was Bank of Italy. This west corner of "F" and Tulare was Jinkawa's Hotel [Hotel Ryan, 1443 Tulare]. Downstairs they had a bar. It was run by a Caucasian. Next to it was Yoshioka's restaurant [T. Yoshioka, 1009 "F" Street]. They live in the Bowles area now. There was another restaurant called Matsubara [N. Matsubara, 1015 "F" Street]. It was small. Next to it was Lyceum Theatre [1019 "F" Street]. That was run by Mr. Miwa. And this south corner of "F" And Mariposa was Torii's hotdog stand.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: There was a Takemoto's restaurant next to Lyceum Theatre.

MR. MASUDA: This came way afterwards. We had a sort of restaurant there, too. [M. Masuda, soft drinks, 1023 "F" Street]. They closed.

MRS. INADA: Just before the war you lived on "F" Street, didn't you?

MR. MASUDA: Yes. We lived on China Alley near Kern Street. Then we moved to Tulare Street, then we moved to "E" Street, and then on "F" Street. Then there was the evacuation.

MRS. INADA: How many times did you move?

MR. MASUDA: Four times. There wasn't much business on Fagan Alley. There was one tofu shop. What was their name?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: The Tanabe family.

MRS. INADA: By the way, right here on "F" Street next to Tanaka's restaurant, there was a little alley. Frank Matsumoto's mother Mrs. Narushima lived here. She was a midwife.

MRS. HIRASUNA: She delivered a lot of babies.

MR. MASUDA: Oh, that passage way. That was between Mitsuhara's Pool Hall and Maruko's, on the same block.

MRS. INADA: No, it was by the Tanaka's restaurant.

MR. MASUDA: Oh, they moved next door. They built it. There was a big open lot there, and in that lot was a big hole. I remember playing there; digging caves, et cetera. Next to the lot was Nakai's. There was a passage way there.

MRS. INADA: By the way, across from Nakai's grocery store was the first open air theatre.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Ikeda Open Theatre. There was no roof.

MR. MASUDA: It was open during the summer. It wasn't a drive-in theatre. You watched movies seated.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: They had a movie theatre at the south side of the street, then they moved across the street.

MRS. HIRASUNA: When did the Ikedas take over?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Ikedas and Kimuras are the same family, as Mr. Kimura married an Ikeda.

MRS. HIRASUNA: Anyway, my mother used to tell me when we were 3 or 4 years old, Ikeda twins and I were the same age. But since they were twins, they came after me and teased me.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: They moved to across the street on "F" Street where an open theatre operated. At that time admission was 5 cents.

MRS. HIRASUNA: How about Tanabes? I thought they were in China Alley by Kamikawa's in 1912 or so.

MR. MASUDA: There were a lot of apartments here on Fagan Alley. One of them was a tofu shop.

MRS. INADA: Tanabe's Tofu Shop.

MR. MASUDA: Yes. There was an apartment building. The only residents were Japanese.

MRS. TAIRA: What is the floorplan of these apartments?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: It was a wooden building.

MR. MASUDA: Not of bricks.

MRS. TAIRA: Did each have its own bathroom?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: No. Usually you'd go to a bathhouse. Bathhouses were here and there.

MR. MASUDA: We were speaking of Fagan Alley. That's all the businesses. Then we go to "E" Street.

MRS. HIRASUNA: Years ago, did the Mayeda family used to live in Fagan Alley?

MR. MASUDA: I don't know. Then they have moved into "E" Street.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Opposite the Buddhist Church. There was a piano shop.

MRS. INADA: No, but the Mayedas lived in a big house, a very big house in the 800 block of "E" Street, on the south side of the street.

MRS. HIRASUNA: Yes. It was way before they lived in Fagan Alley. Daughter Alice taught piano later.

MRS. INADA: We used to live on Fagan Alley in the 900 block; then we moved to the 800 block, still on Fagan Alley.

MR. MASUDA: We come down "E" Street, all the way from Ventura. Go down, then we come to Mono, then we come to Okonogi Hospital [708 "E" Street].

MRS. HIRASUNA: Okonogi's used to be on "F" Street.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Next to the present Chihuahua Tortilla Shop.

MRS. INADA: About the middle of the block, almost.

MR. MASUDA: This is Kern. They have Azteca Theatre here. Wasn't it right here?

MRS. HIRASUNA: No, it was way before.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: It was something like an apartment house.

MR. MASUDA: Dakuzakus were here, too.

MRS. INADA: They used to be. Okonogi used to be between Inyo and Mono on "F" Street.

MRS. HIRASUNA: Anyway, Okonogi Hospital was between Inyo and Mono. Last week another hospital was appointed as a historical site together with Kamikawa. It was in the 900 block of "E" Street. I read in the paper.

MRS. TAIRA: It was Nihon Hospital.

MR. MASUDA: Hashiba?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: No, Nihon Hospital. It was called Nihon Hospital at first. It was one of the first in California as a Japanese hospital. Dr. Okonogi had Dr. Hashiba and Dr. Hashiba took over later, way later.

MRS. TAIRA: Were the doctors from Japan?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Yes, there was a Dr. Maruyama, too.

MR. MASUDA: There was another doctor from Japan.

MRS. TAIRA: There weren't any Japanese-American doctors?

MR. MASUDA: Not yet.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: We are talking about 60 years ago.

MR. MASUDA: Okonogi Hospital was well known. I think Mrs. Inada's family lived right across the street from Okonogi. There was also Saito and Tani. It was called Yo Gakko and people were all Japanese. Komoto, Murotani, Kumamoto, Hiroyama, Misaka, Kuwamoto.

MRS. INADA: Iino.

MR. MASUDA: Ikeda, Tachino, Miyazawa--and there was a hospital here [708 "P" Street].

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Dr. Hayashi.

MR. MASUDA: Because I had my tonsils out here, I remember I stayed there.

MRS. INADA: Is that before Iino came?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Yes, before.

MR. MASUDA: That's right. Tinos lived there. Murotani lived there as a resident home.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: That's way later, because we had our tonsils out by Dr. Hayashi.

MRS. HIRASUNA: Nori (Masuda) wasn't born yet.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Yes, he was.

MR. MASUDA: I remember my dad said I can't drink milk, as I just had it out. Anyway, we go down "E" Street. On the west corner of Inyo and "E" Street, there was Fresno Congregational Church [801 "E" Street]. They had a softball ground and tennis court, too. We used to play there often. Then there was the Buddhist Church [1340 Kern Street]. Three churches were lined on this block.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: The third one was the Methodist Church.

MRS. INADA: There was a boardinghouse around here, too.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: When I went to Japanese school, it was in the Buddhist Church at "E" Street.

MR. MASUDA: Yes, and they brought a three-story white building from somewhere as a boardinghouse. This Buddhist Church was burnt down around in 1920. Then they built a concrete building.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Then they demolished the boardinghouse. But before the boardinghouse was in the basement of the Buddhist Church, and so was the Japanese school.

MR. MASUDA: They had everything there. Crossing Kern Street, there was Tanigawa Hotel on the west corner of Kern and "E" [913 "E" Street].

Downstairs they had a Japanese store. They sold some kind of sporting goods.

MRS. NAKAJIMA AND MRS. INADA: No, pianos.

MR. MASUDA: Oh, pianos? Later Tanabes were selling something. I thought it was sporting goods.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Might be.

MRS. INADA: I thought Dr. Hashiba used to be there, too.

MR. MASUDA: Then next is Matsu no Sushi on "E" Street. It came way later. Then next to it was a wooden building. I thought it was a hospital at one time, too. It looked like a usual quiet home.

MRS. INADA: It used to be Mary Mayeda's home.

MR. MASUDA: Did they turn it into a hospital?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: I don't know.

MR. MASUDA: And then there was the Japanese Hospital taken by Dr. Hashiba later [935 "E" Street]. Across "E" Street from the hospital was Murashima's Dressmaking School [Murashima, D., locksmith, 922 "E" Street]. Next to it was the Japan Times Building [920 "E" Street]. Who was the editor?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: It was the Central California Japanese Times. (Chuka Jiho)

MRS. INADA: Mr. Nagaoka?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Yes, before Mr. Nagaoka was Mr. Kawashima, Kawashima Tengai.

MR. MASUDA: Next to Murashima Sewing School was Wakasa's Trucking. Then we go down to the south corner of Tulare and "E". There was Yamasaki's Garage. It was a service station and garage.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Later it was Mikado Laundry. Later Mr. Fujisawa, originally a hotel man, took it over.

MR. MASUDA: Then we go across Tulare Street. This space at the west corner of Tulare and "E" was Fred Murayama's hotel [Yamato Hotel, 1337 Tulare]. It was a two-story building. Murakami had a big pool hall next to the hotel, and it was right across from the Okayama Kenjinkai [1336 Tulare]. People got together there, and it was sort of a boardinghouse. Next to the Okayama Kenjinkai was Mikado Laundry run by Miyami.

Then next alley, I don't know the name. There is a highway here now. There was hardly any business. Tashima's Service Station was then on the east corner of "D" and Tulare. Later on they moved to the corner of "E" and Mariposa Street. Now we go to Tulare Street from the intersection of "G" and Tulare.

MR. MASUDA: Next store is Natori's restaurant [1535 Tulare]. Then Komatsu's store [S. Komatsu, grocer, 1527 Tulare]. They were selling candy and other things. Then this is Fukuhara on Tulare between China Alley and "F". They had a barbershop [1521 Tulare] and candy store in front. Across from the store, on the other side of Tulare, there was Kawai's restaurant.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Yes.

MR. MASUDA: There was Arifuku, too [S. Arifuku, restaurant, 1548 Tulare]. Then there was Kataoka Jewelry on Tulare between "G" and China

Alley. They had a pool hall and were selling jewelry, too.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: This [south] corner of China Alley and Tulare, Mr. Taira had a jewelry shop [T-Y Jewelry Company, 1544 Tulare, W.K. Yamamoto].

MRS. INADA: Then Takata's restaurant right by Del Monte's Packinghouse [C. Takata, restaurant, 1601 Tulare].

MR. MASUDA: Right next to the railroad tracks. Then Jinkawa's Hotel [Hotel Ryan, 1443 Tulare] at the west corner of "F" and Tulare. Next to it was Mishima's pool hall [1441 Tulare]. Then Ryan Theatre run by Mr. Nishioka [1437 Tulare]. Behind it was Iwata's bathhouse. Then there was Kagetsu's Japanese restaurant. There used to be Western Hotel, too. Then the north corner of Tulare and Fagan Alley was Aki Store [1427 Tulare].

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Then across Fagan Alley was Shintaku Hotel at the corner.

MR. MASUDA: Yes, they had a hotel on the second floor. Below was a Chinese grocery store. Next to it was Yamare's Pool Hall. Next to it was -

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Masuda's Fish [San Joaquin Fish, H. Masuda, 1417 Tulare].

MR. MASUDA: The fish store was taken over by Arie. Kamiyama had a photo shop upstairs [1413 Tulare]. Sasaki Jewelry Store, called Tamaya, was at the same block, too, which was before he moved to "F" between Kern and Tulare. [Sasaki, T.S., watchmaker, 934 "F"]. I remember I used to live in the apartment house at Fagan Alley. The tenants were all Japanese. There were about six apartment houses. We used to go to the cinema.

MRS. INADA: What was this east corner of Tulare and "E" Street?

MR. MASUDA: It was a Chinese herb shop. It was all Chinese around "E" Street and Tulare Street. There was Okamura's Laundry on Tulare between "F" and Fagan Alley [1436 Tulare].

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Long before Okamuras were Fujimotos. Mr. Fujimoto was Mrs. Henmi's father. They were there before she went back to Japan.

MR. MASUDA: Next to Okamura was Takemoto's barbershop [1430 Tulare]. The east corner of Fagan Alley and Tulare was Yamamura's Drug Store (Nichi Bei Drug Store) [1426 Tulare]. The other side of Fagan Alley was Hasegawa's Hotel [1414 Tulare]. There was a pool hall there, but I don't know who ran it.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Well, later it was Yoshikawas. But before then there was somebody. Wasn't it Mr. Takemoto?

MR. MASUDA: Yoshiyuki Takemoto? I don't know.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: I don't either.

MRS. TAIRA: Was Okayama Kenjinkai the only kenjinkai? How about Hiroshima? Did they have a kenjinkai, too?

MR. MASUDA: I don't think so.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: There were several in California. Some are, even now. But then Kenjinkai was an inn, as there were many bachelors at that time. They had no family and nowhere to stay. So they stayed at this inn.

MRS. TAIRA: Do you know how much they charged?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Oh, it was cheap. One dollar or something.

MR. MASUDA: No, cheaper than that.

MRS. HIRASUNA: Probably one dollar a week or so.

MRS. INADA: That included meals and bath.

MRS. TAIRA: What were they doing who stayed at that kind of place?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: They were engaged in some kind of work in the countryside. They came to town sometimes to have a good time.

MRS. INADA: And they had an extra room where people gathered playing hana-fuda (flower cards) at night. Or, when it rained, there was no work. So they played cards.

Then we go down Kern Street from the intersection of "G" Street.

Hamanaka's restaurant was a little away from the Japanese town [1825 Kern].

MR. MASUDA: On Kern Street, when you pass Broadway Street, there was a railroad track. Southern Pacific Railroad. You pass it going toward town. Then Hamanaka's restaurant [1825 Kern]. Then you go one block, Saharas and -- [T. Matsuyama and R. Sahara, restaurant, 1809 Kern].

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Matsuyamas.

MR. MASUDA: And who else? There were three families.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: No, two.

MR. MASUDA: Maybe two. There was a restaurant, too. If you go one block away from Kern, there was Watanabe's restaurant on Inyo between Fulton and Broadway. So there were three restaurants across the track. Japanese and Western. They had good business.

MRS. TAIRA: Where was the station?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: On "H".

MR. MASUDA: There was a Greyhound Bus Station on the corner of Mariposa and "H" Streets. Then Hamasumi's Pool Hall on the west corner of "G" and Kern. Then there was Masuda's Dry Goods Shop. [1537 Kern.]

MRS. INADA: Then Matsumoto's bookstore.

MR. MASUDA: Across the street was Kamikawa's Department Store [1540-48 Kern].

MRS. INADA: Corner of Kern and China Alley was Sakamoto's Pool Hall [1517 Kern].

MR. MASUDA: Downstairs was a Japanese restaurant.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: I forgot the name, but it was downstairs.

MRS. INADA: Then Baba's Bathhouse.

MR. MASUDA: Barbershop, too.

MRS. INADA: Bantani-san's bathhouse.

MR. MASUDA: Yes, that's what they called it. At that time, admission fee for a child was 5 cents. We were given the towels, too.

MRS. TAIRA: Did they give them away?

MR. MASUDA: No. You could use them when you took a bath, and left the towels there when finished.

MRS. TAIRA: What about soap.

MR. MASUDA: Soap was provided in the bathhouse.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: You don't know who used it, though.

MR. MASUDA: They had a men's section and a women's section. It's a Japanese style bath. Big bathtub.

MRS. TAIRA: You didn't have a bathtub at home then?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: No.

MR. MASUDA: Not many houses did. So when we were kids, we washed but did not bathe at home. You sat at the rim of the washtub and had your body washed. When we got tired of it, we went to a bathhouse.

MRS. INADA: Next to Bantani's bathhouse was Yuki's restaurant. It wasn't there before.

MR. MASUDA: It was a Japanese restaurant before. Then next door was Henmi's grocery store [Henmi Company, grocers, 1503 Kern]. Before Yuki it was a Japanese restaurant.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Before Henmi, Mr. Kawai was doing counter restaurant, my folks. Restaurant-coffee shop. Then next to it was Sudas'. They were three brothers or something. They were selling sake by the barrel.

MR. MASUDA: Before Henmi.

MRS. TAIRA: Did they bring the sake from Japan?

MR. MASUDA: Probably.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: I don't know.

MR. MASUDA: If it was in the barrel, it must be made in Japan.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: They used to sell it in barrels, too.

MRS. INADA: I think it was George Suda's father.

MR. MASUDA: Then the corner of "F" and Kern was Tensho-do [1501 Kern]. Then we pass through Ito Dry Goods [901 "F"] and next to it was Matsuda's magazine shop. That came a little later.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: That was before?

MR. MASUDA: I think it was just a storeroom there. Then next was Matsumoto printing [Fresno Printing Company, K.H. Matsumoto, 1431 Kern].

MRS. TAIRA: Did they deal with English and Japanese?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Japanese.

MR. MASUDA: It was all Japanese at that time. Then next to it was Kawahara's shoe repair [1429 Kern]. Next to it was Takemoto's barbershop.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: It was later.

MR. MASUDA: Yes, it was much later. Then this corner of Kern and Fagan Alley, where there is Sakura Sushi now, there used to be a storeroom for stage, dressing room. Across from Fagan Alley was Suga's bookstore [Suga Setsu Books, 1423 Kern Street].

MRS. INADA: No, before that it used to be Date Singer Sewing Machine.

MR. MASUDA: Next door was Nagaoka's tofu shop.

MRS. INADA: Nagahama.

MR. MASUDA: Nagahama came later. It used to be Nagaoka. They only sold age (fried tofu) and tofu.

MRS. HIRASUNA: How about konnyaku?

MR. MASUDA: Oh, yes. Konnyaku, too.

MRS. TAIRA: Was the tofu regular?

MRS. HIRASUNA: Yes, not kinugoshi (fine-grained).

MR. MASUDA: Then we had a barbershop, Takayama barbershop [1417 Kern]. They moved to Parlier. They had a daughter named Naomi, Dolly. Then next was Alma's Beauty Shop. They moved from this location now. Then next to it was Masuda's Tempura. They made tempura and kamaboko (fish cake). They were next door to Jitsumyo. Then, the north corner of "E" and Kern was Fukimura's Soda Fountain [1403 Kern]. Across "E" Street was Tanigawa's hotel. Next to Tanigawa's was Kato's Tempura. Tempura, tamagoyaki (egg rolls), et cetera.

MRS. INADA: The name of the shop was Marutama.

MR. MASUDA: Wasn't there a Japanese sewing school around here?

MRS. INADA: Wada's Sewing School.

MR. MASUDA: It was right across from the Buddhist Church.

MRS. TAIRA: Did they teach how to sew Japanese kimono?

MRS. INADA: No, all western clothes. You draft a pattern.

MR. MASUDA: Now, we come back to "G" and Kern. There was Kamikawa Store [1540-48 Kern]. It was a large store, and they had everything, including a bank and a department store.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Groceries, too.

MR. MASUDA: Yes, they had it downstairs. Then the east corner of "F" and Kern was West Side Garage [1502 Kern].

MRS. INADA: What was across China Alley from Kamikawa?

MR. MASUDA: It was Dick's shoe store [Dick Avakian, shoe repair, 15261 Kern].

MRS. INADA: No, before that.

MR. MASUDA: I don't know.

MRS. HIRASUNA: Dick's Shoe Store used to be on the east corner of Kern and Fagan Alley. Father used to have a shoe store around Fagan Alley.

MRS. INADA: It was just repair only. There was a sumo place, wasn't there?

MR. MASUDA: Yes, where Dick's store was. It is Aki now. Kamikawa's built this building [East Corner, Kern and China Alley]. They had storage here and a chop suey or noodle shop. Then we had a place where we used to practice sumo.

MRS. TAIRA: Who did?

MR. MASUDA: Everybody.

MRS. INADA: When you, Setsu, had a wedding reception, you had it there. It was called Tokiwa.

MRS. HIRASUNA: Matsuura family.

MRS. INADA: They used to call it Tokiwa and George Iwahashi used to work with them. June Toshiyuki's uncle and aunt ran the Japanese eating place before the Matsuura's did. Then they sold it to the Matsuura's.

MR. MASUDA: Then we continue on Kern. Ohta's pool hall was at the south corner of "F" and Kern. Do you know before that? Wasn't there a movie house here behind Ohta's Pool Hall? Asoka.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: It is a photo studio now. It used to be on "F" Street. Then they moved to this location.

MRS. TAIRA: Did they show Japanese movies?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: No, only English, American movies.

MRS. INADA: There was a noodle factory here. They moved to Pismo.

MRS. HIRASUNA: Yamada's.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: They were making a variety of things.

MR. MASUDA: All I know was Ishida's Japanese Restaurant on the corner of Kern and Fagan Alley. I don't know. I know Tom Kamikawa had a fish store.

MRS. INADA: It was the same little place. And there was a little manju shop on Kern Street next to Ishida-san.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Fuji. Oh, could be Fukuhara or Fujiwara. He was going to school, too. Then he went back to Japan. I heard he went to Manchuria later.

MR. MASUDA: Then across Fagan Alley from Ishida, on the south corner was Araki's Ice Cream [1424 Kern].

MRS. HIRASUNA: Tea ice cream.

MR. MASUDA: Tea ice cream was famous, very tasty.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: It was later operated by Mr. and Mrs. Araki, Senior.

MRS. INADA: Mr. Taira invented tea ice cream.

MR. MASUDA: I thought it was Araki's idea.

MRS. INADA: No. Mr. Taira did the tea ceremony. And he told Mr. Araki about getting tea into ice cream and making tea ice cream.

MR. MASUDA: Then next was Sakata's Seed Company.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: That's later.

MR. MASUDA: Next to it was Jitsumyo's Grocery Store. They moved from across Kern Street. It was recent, though. Then the east corner of "E" and Kern was the OK Garage [1402 Kern]. And across from the Congregational Church was a judo place. Behind was an open field for sumo at the north corner of Inyo and "D" Streets. All the boys in Central California came for the fights. From Lodi, Fowler, Selma, Kingsburg, Reedley, et cetera. There was a referee (gyoji) , too. They wore fundoshi (loincloths), too.

MRS. INADA: We used to have an undokai (track meet), too. The famous undokai of the Buddhist Church.

MR. MASUDA: We took advantage of the alley and drew white lines. We used it for track.

MRS. INADA: Henry Yasuhira used to live in Bakersfield. He had a young

caravan of 18 or 19. He used to represent Bakersfield to come to this undokai.

MRS. HIRASUNA: He came from Hawaii.

MRS. TAIRA: Was it a Japanese people's undokai?

EVERYBODY: Yes.

MRS. TAIRA: For those who lived in town?

MRS. HIRASUNA: For those from the countryside, too.

MR. MASUDA: They came to school in town at that time. Everybody brought his own lunch and the undokai was jammed.

MRS. INADA: It was something.

MR. MASUDA: There were banners and flags hanging from the top of the flagpole. It was really something.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: We had Japanese schools' undokai, too. On occasion of Tenchdsetsu (Emperor's birthday), we had a ceremony in the morning and undokai in the afternoon.

MRS. TAIRA: Where did you have this ceremony?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: At the Buddhist Church. Later at a movie hall.

MRS. INADA'AND MRS. HIRASUNA: Nippon Hall.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Before that, long before that, we had it somewhere on Kern. Right across the church where there was a big hall called Toyo Dan. Upstairs, seven or eight bachelors were staying. So the Japanese community used to have ceremonies and other when there was an occasion. One night in the early 1920's, it caught fire. It was past 1 o'clock in the morning after plays were over. People ran away. They came to the church, but the church caught fire, too. Those staying at the dormitory, Reverend Ichimura's wife and my mother gathered children.

MRS. TAIRA: All were wooden buildings?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: All of them.

MRS. INADA: Fumi, when you used to practice kendo (fencing), where did you do it?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Kenbu (sword dance)? It was here southwest of the Buddhist Church (now freeway). My father started a dojo. Because at that time bachelors were working, they did not go to school. And they had no place for recreation, nor a place to get together. So they used to go to Chinese gambling houses and spend all the money. It was not good for the youth. So he started a dojo.

MRS. TAIRA: Was there kendo, too?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Kendo, judo, karate--everything. Then the dojo was built. It was the very first dojo in California. There was another one

in the state of Washington. I forgot the name. It was started about the same time, I think. They ere given awards or degrees in judo. My father Mr. Isada Kawai, was judo and kendo instructor.

MR. MASUDA: It was quite remarkable for that time.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: My father was a moralist. There was naginata, too. Teacher was a man, though.

MRS. TAIRA: Was there shigin, too?

MRS. INADA: No.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Seventy years ago, we had no teachers of dance, naginata, et cetera. Kenbu was the only one of that kind. (Kenbu is combination of dance and kendo). Later they started sumo.

MR. MASUDA: I didn't like it. You had to take off clothes. Some men came to my father to recommend me and I had to wrestle.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: My brother K. Kawai was named one minute wrestler. And then you didn't have a bath at home. So they went to the public bathhouse after the match.

MR. MASUDA: There was a streetcar on "F" Street and throughout the city of Fresno.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: It was yellow.

MRS. TAIRA: Like the one in the Spaghetti Factory?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Something like that. At first the car went down to the end of the line on "F" Street and then came back. Later they had a conductor/driver selling tickets. He did everything. Later there was the Ota family on Inyo. Otas were running a pool hall. One day their daughter, 6 or 7 years old, was run over by the streetcar. She was killed instantly. The streetcar pulled the corpse 'til the end -- her father became ill. It was an accident I remember.

MRS. HIRASUNA: This was when? Because I used to ride this streetcar in the 1920's.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: This was way before.

MRS. INADA: Dr. Taira and I used to ride the streetcar to go to school.

MRS. HIRASUNA: Oh, that was when you went to Fresno High?

MRS. INADA: Yes. We used to walk up to Fulton Street to ride a streetcar to school.

MR. MASUDA: This streetcar went to Fresno Street and turned into town.

MRS. HIRASUNA: I used to ride the streetcar home. The end of the road was McKenzie and Ninth.

MRS. INADA: We used to go to the fair on the streetcar.

MRS. HIRASUNA: There was a park around Farmers Common Building.

MRS. INADA: Commercial park?

MR. MASUDA: A small park. Now the Greyhound Bus Station is there. There was the streetcar station, and it took you all the way up to the County Fair. There also was a baseball ground at the Fairground. We used to walk there. I remember Toru Hasegawa and I used to walk up there and get in free. Later on they made a Japanese ballpark at California Avenue and Fresno Street, and we went there. It was cheap then.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: This was the center of Central California until evacuation. After that it was no longer the center.

MRS. INADA: Did you always live on "E" Street?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Yes.

MRS. INADA: Dr. Taira used to live here at the south corner of Mono and "F" Street.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: We were living opposite Maruko's.

MRS. INADA: Did Takatas always live next door to you?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Not always, later. For 14 to 15 years. Not after the war.

MRS. INADA: Who lived on this side of you?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Komotos. Komotos of Komoto Department Store.

MRS. INADA: Was that afterwards?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: No, before the war. I remember because Mr. and Mrs. Komoto were married in the house. My mother was invited. But they forgot us children, just my folks. Later there lived the attorney Okawara. Before that there were no other Japanese. Over the river the only Japanese were Yabunos and Bishop Okada.

MRS. TAIRA: Which other ethnic groups were there beside the Japanese?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Germans, Russians, and a few Armenians.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: There were Chinese in Chinatown. Chinese were there before the Japanese business came in. But businesswise, it was mostly Japanese, wasn't it?

MR. MASUDA: But it's amazing, though. There were about 15 restaurants and six Japanese restaurants. They had enough business. Bathhouses, too.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: We had three of them.

MR. MASUDA: Iwata, Baba's, there was one in China Alley. Another one on "F" Street.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: In my days, there was a canal in front of the Buddhist

Church. It's more like a ditch. I thought it was deep, but I was a child so that could be why I thought it was deep. Anyway, it went through -

MR. MASUDA: Kern Street?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Yes, it went 'til Kern Street. They parked wagons and horses here, since there were no cars. Then they crossed the canal to go to the church.

MR. MASUDA: There were no cars then, and some people came from Bakersfield to attend the service. My mother used to tell me they came by train and stayed overnight. That's why there were so many hotels.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: There was a man named Okinaka in the Santa Fe round house at Bakersfield. Round house is where you put oil in the train. His son came to Fresno, too. Those in Bakersfield were sent here to go to Japanese school.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: My mother was a cook at the dormitory of the Buddhist Church. There were about 24 or 25 then.

MR. MASUDA: Yes, those in the dormitory came from other places like Reedley. Parents were busy working, so they sent their children here for education.

MRS. TAIRA: Japanese School?

EVERYBODY: Yes.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: And 25 or 30 years later, teachers went to the countryside from Fresno. To Selma, Kingsburg, Fowler, on Saturdays and Sundays.

MRS. TAIRA: Was it for Japanese education?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Yes. Mrs. Hirasuna's mother was a teacher for advanced students. She was the first teacher to come to Fresno.

MRS. HIRASUNA: My mother went to school in Japan.

MRS. INADA: Teachers' School.

MRS. HIRASUNA: Tokyo Ochanomiza Teachers' School where they trained girls' high school teachers for all of Japan. She was one of the first to come to Fresno. She taught a few months at the Buddhist Church when she first arrived. Then she had all her family. Then in about 1920, she started to teach again, because we were very poor and I guess Japanese school was a little more popular. So she went to Sunnyside on Saturday and Sanger on Sunday.

MRS. INADA: How did she get around?

MRS. HIRASUNA: Papa took her. I used to take her, too, to Sanger by car.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: We had cars then. By that time the Isseis living improved, and they thought their children needed some Japanese education. That's why teachers started to go

around. It was better to learn Japanese all day on weekends. It was better than going to Japanese school every day for an hour and a half after finishing American schools. Studying full day or Saturday and half day on Sunday was much better. The students are much better, advanced in every respect.

MRS. TAIRA: Did you learn reading, too?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Both reading and writing.

MRS. TAIRA: How about brush writing?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Japanese writing was done only by brush in those days.

MRS. INADA: Pen.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: In my days, Japanese school was held at the Buddhist Church every day. Subject was different every day; history, et cetera, and writing was on Friday. Later it was by pen. Mrs. Hirasuna's mother was different in calligraphy. She was so good. She actually learned from a private teacher in Japan.

MRS. HIRASUNA: In horse and buggy days we used to go out to the country. We used to visit Frank Ishii's family. His mother was a graduate of the same teachers' college as my mother, so they became good friends. We went to Bowles. We would get up real early in the morning, crack of the dawn, and I think my father rented a horse and buggy the night before. He took the family out early and we'd go to Masako's father's (Saito's) fish store. We bought o-sashimi and all kinds of things. Then we went all the way up to Bowles. How many miles is it to Bowles?

MR. MASUDA: About 10 miles.

MRS. HIRASUNA: Anyway, we started so that we could get there before noon. We ate lunch, and spent the whole afternoon and then we ate together at night, and then we came home. Lots of times by moonlight. I must have been four or five.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: The Ishiis used to come around, too. He drove one of the first Fords, for five people. Mr. Saiki had one of the first and later Kamikawas.

MRS. TAIRA: When did the first cars come on the market?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: 1914?

MR. MASUDA: It was very rare. I heard that one of the first ones was bought by Mr. Kamikawa or Mr. Nakata. They were one of the first ones to buy a car.

MRS. HIRASUNA: We knew Kamikawas did, because we went to see it at their store. Around 1916, my father used to have a motorcycle. He used to put me on the back and then come to the store, and then I went to this Lincoln School.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Her father was very familiar with machines. He was one of the first to ride a bicycle around here. Then he started a bicycle

shop.

MR. MASUDA: Why don't we mention something about prices in those times? It might be interesting.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Across the Buddhist Church, there is a Mexican store now, was a small bakery called French Bakery. Since my mother was a cook, we had to go there early in the morning to buy bread. Two or three cents per loaf. It was big bread. We bought four or five of them. They didn't even wrap them. And since we were so small, they gave us one donut or snail. That kept us rising early in the morning. Things were cheap, and so were wages. There was a candy called Tootsie Roll. You could get five or six of them with one penny.

MRS. HIRASUNA: How much is it now?

MR. MASUDA: It is 25 cents now.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: At Araki's candy store (on the south corner of Kern and Fagan Alley), they had candy and ice cream. They didn't wrap them at that time. They were in big jars and you scooped with your own hand. We were going to Japanese school. There was a break of about 10 minutes. I didn't have money as we were living in the church. But there were daughters of businessmen on China Alley- like Yoshimi, Takemoto, Kimura. They were given 5 or 10 cents when customers came. And went to the store. One penny was more than enough for five or six girls.

MRS. INADA: Was that behind the tofu shop?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Yes, on "E" Street. In that apartment, Yamazakis and Murashimas were living. Those days houses were not so fine as nowadays.

MRS. TAIRA: How many rooms did they have usually?

MR. MASUDA: An apartment house had two bedrooms and a kitchen.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: No dining room.

MR. MASUDA: No water facilities, either. You had to go outside for one faucet. No hot water. Living were Iwatas, Minamotos, us, Tokugawa, Mishima, Ono, Tominaka.

MRS. INADA: That was which apartment?

MR. MASUDA: It was behind Shintaku Hotel. Restroom was outside. No bath. Since we couldn't go to bathhouse all the time, we had to get up early in the morning to wash our faces. It was cold.

MRS. INADA: Otherwise you wouldn't be able to use the faucet.

MR. MASUDA: Since everybody was using it.

MRS. TAIRA: Was it cold in winter?

MR. MASUDA: Yes. So we filled a jug with hot water (yutanpo) to warm up our feet. Those apartments didn't have a heater then.

MRS. INADA: No air conditioner either. How many were in your family, Nori?

MR. MASUDA: Seven.

MRS. INADA: Including your parents?

MR. MASUDA: No, nine all together.

MRS. INADA: Then you lived in just one apartment?

MR. MASUDA: No. As we increased we moved out. There were three houses around the big baseball ground of the Buddhist Church. We lived here. And then we moved to "D" Street between Kern and Inyo. And that place had quite a bit of rooms. We had two bedrooms, a living room, and a separate kitchen. Water was on all the time.

MRS. HIRASUNA: Luxury.

MR. MASUDA: And then we had a Japanese style bathtub. Very few, though. You burn firewood under the tub. It was deep. We shared it with other two families. It was outside.

MRS. INADA: Was Mr. Koki living there then?

MR. MASUDA: Yes, Yamamotos, too.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Goro Yamamoto?

MR. MASUDA: He was there.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Mr. Yamane was there, too.

MR. MASUDA: I don't know.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: In relation to Yamamotos, I remember.

MR. MASUDA: When John Shintaku moved out, we moved in there.

MRS. TAIRA: Which part of Japan were most of the people from?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: No particular prefecture. Of course, many were from Hiroshima. But some were from Okayama. Mixed. From everywhere in Japan. But in Central California, many people came from Hiroshima.

MR. MASUDA: Even today.

MRS. HIRASUNA: Which prefecture are your parents from?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Ehime. How about you?

MRS. HIRASUNA: Yamaguchi.

MRS. INADA: Wakayama.

MR. MASUDA: Hiroshima.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: See, everybody's different. Where are you from?

MRS. TAIRA: Tokyo.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: See, five people; five different places. Everywhere in America, your neighbor is the closest to you. Not relatives. Whichever part of Japan they were from.

MR. MASUDA: In the country, bathtubs were Japanese, too. People were talking about bathtubs. Metal (totan) gets too hot. Sides were all redwood.

MRS. HIRASUNA: No. Lots of people had metal sides and wooden bottom liner.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Not redwood.

MRS. TAIRA: Was there anybody to make those tubs?

MR. MASUDA: Carpenters did.

MRS. INADA: Yamamoto carpenter.

MR. MASUDA: They were fast.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: It was all before World War II. There were so many Japanese that it was called Japanese Town. After the war, people scattered all over.

MRS. INADA: Is this alley called China Alley because there were Chinese?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Yes, mainly.

MR. MASUDA: There were many gambling houses. Working people went there to have fun.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: And they spent all the money. We call it "Chinese took it." Which means you went to a gambling house.

MR. MASUDA: It was quite a sight.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: That's why my father founded the Dojo. After finishing junior high school, boys came here to study. It's easy to be corrupted if he is alone.

MRS. TAIRA: When did the first Japanese come to this Japanese town?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: About 1903.

MRS. TAIRA: Why did they come here?

MRS. HIRASUNA: Because there is a Buddhist Church?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Buddhist Church was the center. And people came since here were their relatives and acquaintances. Some people came because they heard there were jobs in Central California.

MRS. TAIRA: What kind of jobs?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Agricultural. Later, some people went to Caucasian towns to work, but that was later.

MRS. TAIRA: Did the town develop considerably after the Japanese came?

MR. MASUDA: That's correct. People came to Fresno to work, then next season they go to Sacramento; thus people moved. Then they came back again. Then Fresno was known in due course. More people came. I think that is how Fresno developed.

MRS. TAIRA: Most of the people who came were single?

MR. MASUDA: Many of them.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Some came as picture brides.

MRS. HIRASUNA: In what year did your mother come?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Around 1904. She was just a teenager. In 1903 or 1906 she landed in San Francisco.

MRS. HIRASUNA: My mother didn't come 'til 1909.

MR. MASUDA: Early immigrants.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: I was born in 1905 in San Francisco.

MRS. TAIRA: So people didn't come here directly?

MR. MASUDA: Some people did. Some were settled in some other place and then they heard about Fresno. Then they came up here.

MRS. TAIRA: Were there some people who came to Fresno directly from Japan?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Usually they landed in San Francisco first and then went to hotels. Then they started to look for a job. Then they heard about Fresno or Central California. Some people went directly to places like Missouri. Or some went to work at railroads. They were sent in a group of five or 10.

MRS. INADA: Where were people settled? In Sacramento?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: In Sacramento, too. When people headed for a place directly, usually there were already some people who knew them. Like a brother or uncle. Those people had in mind where to go. The first people to come to Fresno must have been long before Kamikawas. They came early but there must have been precedents.

MRS. TAIRA: Before Japanese, which ethnic groups lived in this part?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Germans, Chinese—

MR. MASUDA: Armenians.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Not then. They were in Central California, but not in this section.

MR. MASUDA: That's true.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Chinese came to this section before Japanese.

MRS. TAIRA: Armenians settled by Ventura and "G" Street. I went to school with Germans. Italians were all here around Fresno Street between "G" Street and "A" Street.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: They were all immigrants. That's why they got together in one section like Japanese.

MRS. TAIRA: Which language did you speak when you were children?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: We spoke Japanese.

MRS. TAIRA: Only Japanese?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: My folks didn't know English. They always spoke Japanese.

MRS. HIRASUNA: But once we started to go to school, the kids in the family spoke English to each other. But to parents, we spoke in Japanese.

MR. MASUDA: Broken Japanese.

MRS. INADA: Most of us went to Japanese school. After spending full day at school, then went one hour at least after that.

MRS. HIRASUNA: Most of you who were in town went to Japanese school.

MR. MASUDA: That was Monday through Friday. School ended at 3:30. We went home and then went to Japanese school for about an hour. In the country they didn't have it every day. Saturday morning, once a week.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Saturday and Sunday.

MR. MASUDA: Sunday, too?

MRS. HIRASUNA: Saturday or Sunday, depending on the area.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Saturday all day.

MRS. TAIRA: So before you went to school, you only spoke Japanese?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Yes.

MRS. TAIRA: How about playmates?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Neighbors.

MRS. TAIRA: Japanese?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Yes. We didn't mix with Caucasians then.

MR. MASUDA: Yes. Mostly among your own race.

MRS. TAIRA: Was it same with every race?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Yes.

MRS. HIRASUNA: But I lived out in the country more, so when I started to go to school there, my playmates were Caucasians. Then on weekends when I came to church in town, I had Japanese friends.

MR. MASUDA: So you stay in contact with Japanese.

MRS. HIRASUNA: Yes.

MR. MASUDA: She lived out of town. There wasn't a car at your disposal at that time. That's why they had their own Caucasian friends. There were much more of them than Japanese in the country. In town all you have to do is to go to the church ground. Then you will find somebody to play with for sure. "So you want to find somebody? Go to the church." That's what they said.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: The yard of the church was the only place to play then. Some people were busy with their own stores. Then they sent their children to the church yard. Then let them stay there all day on Saturdays. Japanese school was only Monday through Friday.

MRS. TAIRA: Did you enjoy Japanese school?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Yes, we did. I liked it, but I don't know about other people.

MR. MASUDA: Some did, others didn't. It is hard, because lot of time, like us when you go to American school, high school, you go out for sports. You make the team. Then you have no time for Japanese school. So when you are in your freshman year, you don't care any more as you have to make a team. That's what happened to me. The same thing happened to many people. That's why our Japanese language isn't good.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: There was a Chinese church on "G" Street near Tulare. Chinese children went upstairs when they were through with American schools. Even on Saturdays. What they did was to read books regardless of their grades. They read aloud. They didn't learn other things, just to read in Chinese.

MR. MASUDA: I remember. I heard it all the time.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: So Chinese who attended those classes are good in Chinese. My friends didn't play on Saturdays as they had to go to the class. So, Chinese had Chinese school, too. Theirs is older than ours.

MRS. TAIRA: What kind of games did you play?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: We were not allowed to go out of the church yard. When you're a child, your only obligation is to go to school. Saturday was the only day you can play. We played house.

MR. MASUDA: Didn't you play jacks?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: It's later. Jacks are bags and stones are inside.

MR. MASUDA: It's like Ojami, but little different. They don't play jacks in Japan.

MRS. HIRASUNA: They don't have the kind of floor for the balls to bounce. You can't play on straw mats.

MR. MASUDA: In Japan they play Ojami. Some did here, too. How do you call it in Japan?

MRS. TAIRA: Otedama.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Later, Takemotos daughter Yoshimi was given a bicycle. She used to ride in the church yard. Since she was such a kind person, she let the others ride, too. Then we played tag.

MRS. HIRASUNA: Hopscotch? (In Japanese, "Ishikeri".)

MRS. NAKAJIMA: You draw lines on the ground and you hop.

MRS. TAIRA: Did you use stones?

MRS. HIRASUNA: Yes.

MR. MASUDA: You throw them and you hop to that.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: We played hide-and-seeK, too.

MRS. HIRASUNA: Jambo?

MR. MASUDA: Jambo, too.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: It was always played. Boys and girls. Boys who stayed in the dormitory. We played dolls if there were some. If we are given a toy, we played with it. We didn't play rough.

MR. MASUDA: We couldn't even go bowling.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: You could go nowhere. It was a luxury to go places.

MR. MASUDA: In your time, there wasn't a tennis court.

MRS. HIRASUNA: No.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: It was later.

MR. MASUDA: Yes. I remember, because when I started growing up, it was already there. We also played baseball in the church yard.
Everybody played there.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Youth Association, it was a football team. It was started (Seinen Renmei) 30, 40 50 years ago. You couldn't go anywhere. So young boys made a team and played.

MRS. TAIRA: I heard there had been a bachelors' boarding house.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: That is dormitory. "Bachelors" are students, boys. Bachelors went to stay at hotels. They were adults and had jobs.

MRS. INADA: That (bachelors' boardinghouse), was where students stayed.

MR. MASUDA: There were boys and girls.

MRS. INADA: No.

MR. MASUDA: Only boys?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: There were only girls at the dormitory of the Buddhist Church. But their bedrooms were separate.

MRS. HIRASUNA: You had a cook and everybody. So I think Congregational Church made their own dormitory.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: That's why the students were called "bachelors." Real bachelors stayed at hotels or kenjinkai.

MR. MASUDA: At Kubo's Nankai ya. They went to work from there.

MRS. TAIRA: Did they stay there all the time?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Some did. But not too many.

MR. MASUDA: They'd leave when the job was over.

MRS. TAIRA: What kind of work did they do?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Mostly farming. Sometimes they washed dishes for Caucasians. They worked at drugstores, too. There was one at Tulare and Fulton. One of my acquaintances worked there as a janitor. Japanese named Yamada. But, in general, the kind of work available wasn't good. But there were work indoors.

MR. MASUDA: There was severe discrimination then. We could not even join unions.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Couldn't purchase land.

MRS. TAIRA: How about those stores in Japanese town?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: All were rented. They lived in the backside of their stores.

MR. MASUDA: Some bought them.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Later they did.

MRS. HIRASUNA: In the name of their children.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Either children or friends.

MR. MASUDA: There were few older Niseis from Hawaii. So some people borrowed their names to purchase land.

MRS. TAIRA: Who owned land?

MRS. INADA: Not too many.

MR. MASUDA: But the Nippon Building was owned by Japanese. It's great.

MRS. HIRASUNA: How would that be?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: They were stockholders.

MRS. TAIRA: Where were the American schools?

MR. MASUDA: Lincoln School.

MRS. TAIRA: Grammar school?

EVERYBODY: Yes.

MR. MASUDA: Most of the people here went to Lincoln School up to sixth grade. Then Edison High School from 7th to 12th grade.

MRS. HIRASUNA: Quite a bit afterwards. What was the high school before?

MR. MASUDA: They just remodeled that school. It is about a mile from here. We all walked then. Nobody had a car.

MRS. TAIRA: Was the Buddhist Church the center of everything?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Yes.

MR. MASUDA: Congregational Church, too.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Whatever it is, you got together at the churches.

MRS. TAIRA: How about the cultural aspect?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Everything was at the Buddhist Church. When I was there, my mother was a cook. There was a single reverend at the Congregational Church, and he came to eat with us.

MR. MASUDA: Oh, they all got together then. There was nowhere else.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: He wasn't married and had no family. He just came from Japan. Those people often joined us. There were a few other bachelors and they came to eat instead of going to places in China Alley.

MR. MASUDA: Since it was expensive for that time. Twenty- five cents was a lot of money then. Noodle was about 15 cents, wasn't it?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Steamed fish and rice. The serving is small nowadays, but it was a big piece at that time. Tea was free. The price was only 10 cents. Ten to 15 cents was sufficient to make a meal.

MR. MASUDA: In my time, hamburger steak only cost 20 cents with soup, coffee, bread, and salad.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Hot cakes were 15 cents or 20 cents with coffee, muffin, and milk.

MR. MASUDA: With butter, too. I remember. I used to work at the restaurant.

MRS. HIRASUNA: Those were the days you work at 15 cents an hour. I remember because I went to work in the farms during summer vacations picking grapes, et cetera.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Your wage was better than usual.

MR. MASUDA: At high time of raisins, you fill one tray and it was a cent and a half.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Today you pack boxes of grapes and they get quite a bit of commission besides a packing fee. Fee is good and they get extra. Everything is so costly nowadays.

MRS. TAIRA: Did you have festivals at the Buddhist Church?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Yes. All the members were Japanese. So we had TenchOsetsu, New Year, and Christmas.

MRS. TAIRA: Christmas at the Buddhist Church?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Yes. There was one schoolteacher named Shimada. We used to decorate a Christmas tree with small lit candles. He got drunk and he climbed up on the table. And the tree caught fire. It was one of the episodes of Christmas. I remember that, so does Araki as well as Yoshida.

MRS. TAIRA: TenchOsetsu took place here, too?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: So did Ho-onko. It was 15th or 16th of January. It is the day when Buddha passed away.

MRS. INADA: Wasn't it November?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: No, January.

MR. MASUDA: Well, before it was in November or December.

MRS. HIRASUNA: About 30th.

MR. MASUDA: They changed it to January now since people are busy in December.

MRS. INADA: But Ho-onko used to be in November, because I used to see them with box lunches. They cooked them behind the Buddhist Church.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Red rice.

MR. MASUDA: Konnyaku and gobo, and nishime, carrots, radish, and satoimo. Box lunch was given to the people who attended the service.

MRS. INADA: There were sweets, too. Made of sugar.

MRS. TAIRA: Who prepared them?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Members of the Women's Association, friends, everybody came to help.

MR. MASUDA: Most of them were Isseis.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: From early in the morning, all the festivals were Japanese except Christmas. At Ho-onko, they only preach nowadays. You observe Ho-onko in Japan, too. It is the memorial of Saint Shinran Shonin.

MRS. INADA: I think Buddhist people have more celebrations than Christian people. Then they have ochigo (children's religious parade).

MRS. NAKAJIMA: It was for special occasions.

MRS. TAIRA: What did you do for New Year's Day, for instance?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: In my days we celebrated at the dormitory. We had ozoni.

MR. MASUDA: Most of the families prepared special food. And each family visited their acquaintances and friends.

MRS. HIRASUNA: They made the rounds.

MRS. INADA: That was before the war. After the war, things kind of quieted down. Then TV came. So after TV, you stay home all day.

MRS. HIRASUNA: You watch the football games.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Some still prepare ozoni, but not all. Only a few people make the rounds nowadays.

MR. MASUDA: Not nowadays.

MRS. HIRASUNA: Oh, we go sometimes.

MR. MASUDA: Very few.

MRS. TAIRA: Did Christians do anything at the Congregational Church?

MRS. HIRASUNA: No.

MR. MASUDA: In my days, Christians came to Buddhist Church. My father invited them. There was nowhere else to go then.

MRS. TAIRA: Did you wear kimono?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: No, but we had mochitsuki in the yard outdoors at those homes in the countryside. Four or five days after Christmas. Everybody, including neighbors and friends, gathered at those houses. We still do it. But it's not as lively as before.

MRS. TAIRA: Did Isseis wear kimono?

EVERYONE: No.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: When there was something, they did. But just sometimes.

MR. MASUDA: Plays were almost the only time when people wore kimono or

hakama (Japanese-style pants for men).

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Nobody wore kimono usually. But sometimes grandparents in Japan sent kimono for their little grandchildren. And they took pictures in it. That's about all.

MRS. TAIRA: Everybody attended ceremony of Tenchosetsu?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Yes, regardless of religion. It was for Japanese community.

MRS. HIRASUNA: Each group took part in the program.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Later location was moved to Nippon Hall. They preferred it to have ceremonies for Tenchosetsu.

MR. MASUDA: Every time they had something there, everybody looked forward to going there.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: There was nowhere else to go. Today young people can go wherever they want as they have cars. But, at that time, cars weren't common. So people gathered at Nippon Hall and it was always jam-packed.

MR. MASUDA: It was full when they had movies, too. Japanese movies. They were not talkies then, so you had a man who explained the movie. He imitated women's and men's voices while a picture was shown. Sometimes naniwabushi (recitation) came, too. We used to leave early as children didn't enjoy it. We didn't understand it. But we enjoyed Japanese movies, samurais, and sword fighting.

MRS. TAIRA: That man (Benshi, who explained the movies) was living here?

EVERYBODY: No.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: He went from place to place, as it was his job. He traveled with the films. So we didn't have movies every day. Twice a month or -

MR. MASUDA: Not that often. Maybe every other month.

MRS. INADA: One was called Namiemon.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: He was around long ago.

MR. MASUDA: Is that the one who had chonmage (men's old hairstyle)?
I saw him in Yokohama one time. I was going to talk to him, but I didn't as my Japanese wasn't good.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Namiemon was sumotori (wrestler) before that. That's why his name is Namiemon. I think so.

MR. MASUDA: He often said, "That's all right."

MRS. NAKAJIMA: He mixed in a little English. He didn't say "Yes," but "All right."

MR. MASUDA: Yes, that was his pet word, "That's all right."

MRS. NAKAJIMA: And toward the end, he said, "no sabeta." It's Spanish.

MR. MASUDA: Means, "I don't know."

MRS. NAKAJIMA: It's from "no sabe," which means "I don't know" in Spanish. Precisely speaking, it's "yo no se." But in Central California, you used "no sabe" when you didn't know or understand. So Namiemon said, "No sabeta," when a samurai is saying "You don't know?" on the screen, and everybody laughed. Not at the core of the drama, but at his saying.

MRS. TAIRA: Did Kabuki come, too?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: No, they didn't come here. They never came to Fresno. They came to LA or San Francisco. We couldn't accommodate them. We couldn't rent the Caucasian's hall. We didn't have money to begin with. Movies were only entertainment available. Then later sumo groups came. I think they were from Osaka. They had matches at the Fairground.

MRS. INADA: We saw amateur Kabuki in Fresno. Kids used to belong to it.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: No, it wasn't Kabuki. It was just a play.

MRS. INADA: No. They had a play on stage on TenchOsetsu. They were amateurs, not Isseis, but Kibeis and Yobiyoses.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Only those who understood Japanese.

MRS. INADA: Girls who belonged to the Buddhist Church were all good dancers.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Young girls learned dancing.

MRS. INADA: Culture was really kept up with the Buddhist group. They really kept up Japanese culture.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: They did everything in the Japanese way at the Buddhist Church. Christian people adopted American culture fast. Buddhists kept Japanese culture. That's the difference.

MRS. TAIRA: Was it popular to learn Japanese things? Like tea ceremony?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Tea ceremony was later. Before the war, only Tanabe and somebody did it. Sada Okuda was teaching flower arrangement, Ikenobo School. It was when we were students.

MRS. INADA: Mr. Taira was teaching tea ceremony.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: He was about the only one. Mrs. Taira did, but later. She learned it from him and taught, which was way later.

MRS. INADA: They had dancing, koto playing, shamisen -

MRS. TAIRA: At the Buddhist Church?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: My mother was one of them. She played shamisen. Later sis did utai, shigin, and koto.

MRS. INADA: After she came back from camp?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Yes.

MRS. TAIRA: How about education?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Isseis worked hard, and they had no time to go to school. There were many who studied at night schools. They went one or two years, but most of them didn't continue.

MRS. TAIRA: Didn't they want to send their children to Japan?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: It was a very popular trend at that time. Isseis worked and saved money. Since there was strong discrimination against Japanese, they thought their children needed to be educated in Japan. So, they sent them to the grandparents in Japan to have them educated for 10 or 15 years. And they called them back. There were those days.

MRS. TAIRA: It wasn't that way all the time?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Recently--after the war--Nisei do not have Sanseis learn Japanese, only English. They speak English at home. Some of Sanseis don't understand Japanese at all. They ask, "What did you say?" Even to my bad Japanese.

MRS. HIRASUNA: Lots of Sanseis can't speak Japanese. My kids don't. I don't. So I understand a little bit, but not the kids.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: If also depends on family. Whether or not they speak Japanese at home. If the grandmother is an old Issei, the grandchildren will try to speak Japanese to her, as they feel they have to since she doesn't understand English. Not too many families, though. If they are not too strict with speaking Japanese, English is far more easy.

MRS. HIRASUNA: I wish I had learned more Japanese.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Me, too. In my days, we come back from grammar school. Then we are exhausted. We are through with a day's work. Japanese class is only one hour, but it's quite an hour. So in the end you don't want to go. Those who studied Saturdays and Sundays learned much better and faster. They were in the country so they didn't go anywhere. Those who studied in Japan were much, much better.

MRS. TAIRA: What do you think are the characteristics of the Japanese group? There are many other ethnic groups, too.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: In this country, the Issei hasn't broken away from a lot of old thinking. When I say old thinking, it is that of the Meiji era, even today. I understand the Japanese in Japan will even think it is out of date. The Issei still hail to Japan.

MRS. HIRASUNA: I think in all ethnic groups, the second generation probably are about the same because the older parent generation all believed in their old customs. So

the second generations are halfway. So I don't know if there are any characteristics that are real Japanese.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: According to Issei's theory, when you visit somebody, you have to take some gift. Niseis come, "Here I come," and goes, "I had a good time," but Isseis still -

MRS. HIRASUNA: Take gifts.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Of course there are some good points, too. But some criticize others, pointing this and that.

MRS. INADA: I think all ethnic groups, regardless which nationality it is, the first generations are all the same.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Some part of the custom remains today. Traditions immigrants brought. Especially in Central California, they preserve Buddhism, New Year's Day. They do the same things practiced back home. Isseis do not let it go.

MRS. INADA: Don't you think most of Issei people have accepted America as their country?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Yes, I think so.

MRS. INADA: The way they educated their children.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: They put too much emphasis on education and there are some side effects. They seek their own comfort.

MRS. TAIRA: How?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: For instance, dope. They have much money and can get anything. They don't listen to their parents and are only interested in their freedom. Some are that way.

MRS. HIRASUNA: I think it depends on the family.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Yes, I think it does. Generally speaking, I think there is too much freedom among younger folks.

MRS. INADA: There is.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: When Issei parents were here, everything was done in their way. We still have some of the customs.

MRS. TAIRA: Like what? For instance in your family, what kind of Japanese tradition do you practice?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: New Year's Day.

MRS. HIRASUNA: Not all families do that any more. But she does, and we do.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Do you do anything on January 15th?

MRS. HIRASUNA: What is it?

MRS. INADA: Do you do something?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Yes, we have ozoni. Fifteenth of January has something do to with Buddhism.

MRS. TAIRA: Ho-onko?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: No, something. It's been a custom, and I just follow it.

MRS. HIRASUNA: You mean you still do it?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Yes.

MRS. HIRASUNA: I haven't even heard of it.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: When my father was still alive, we did "kakizome" (brush calligraphy). We weren't allowed to go out before it was done. Old custom.

MRS. TAIRA: How about Otoshidama (New Year's gifts)?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Yes, and Christmas.

MRS. TAIRA: That's not Japanese.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Oh, yes. Christmas in Japanese way. Taking advantage of it, we did nenmatsu (end of year).

MRS. HIRASUNA: How?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: They give presents in the end of year in Japan, don't they? So we gave presents around Christmas. Even before. Some people still practice it. Dr. Taira sends rice as year-end present.

MRS. HIRASUNA: Oh, I remember their doing that years ago, but I didn't know people still did that any more.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Oh, yes. They still do that.

MRS. TAIRA: Is there anything else? I'm talking about old tradition.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Different families might have different styles. Some families cook turkey or ham instead of ozoni (rice cakes and vegetables in soup). Children prefer them. Some do not even eat ozoni. Some do not like rice cakes.

MRS. HIRASUNA: I like ozoni, but I don't know how to make real ozoni.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Your mother used to make it.

MRS. HIRASUNA: I never watched her cook.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: There are different styles. Ours is sticky.

MRS. HIRASUNA: How do you make soup? I don't know if my mother used to use chicken or kobu.

MRS. INADA: She used to use chicken?

MRS. HIRASUNA: I thought so. I'm not sure.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Yes, we use it, too. I think because we used to have chickens in our own yard.

MRS. INADA: I thought some of ozoni was made with kobu and katsuo (bonito).

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Katsuo is expensive, but it's good.

MRS. TAIRA: Do you remember Japanese sayings? Your parents might know some.

MRS. INADA: Oh, there is. My mother used to say a few things like "Jibun no koto o tana ni agete" (putting your faults on the shelf and criticizing others).

MRS. HIRASUNA: Little things were on the Karuta. They used to play and saying come out on it. They were little cards with Japanese poetry or proverbs.

MRS. TAIRA: Which karuta?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Hyakunin Isshu (hundred poems). We didn't play that often, but we still have it somewhere. Nobody plays it any more. Iroha Garuta has sayings "Inu mo arukeba bo ni ataru" (even a dog runs into a stick if he walks around) or something "nezumi no sodan" (conference of mice).

MRS. INADA: We used to say "nezumi no sadan" when we talk about something.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: "Kawaii ko wa tabi saseyo" (let your precious child go on a journey). I think it is from Iroha Garuta. Different saying-- different family. My mother used to say, "Saigo no ippai wa ochazuke" (the last bowl of rice with tea), and she says "ogochiso ja naikedo ochazuke ga aru," (no feast but rice with tea).

MRS. HIRASUNA: Didn't all Japanese families play karuta?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: No, not all. I know your mother did.

MRS. TAIRA: Before the war, who was the leader of Japanese community?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: We didn't have any particular leader. Isseis formed different associations. There were many before World War II.

MRS. TAIRA: What kind?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: One is Byakudo-kai. Then Kumamoto Kenjin kai, and other kenjinkais.

MRS. HIRASUNA: Japanese Association (Nihonjin Kai).

MRS. NAKAJIMA: We used to have Nihonjin-kai. But later we didn't need it any more, which was before the war. Because children had grown up and

they were fluent in English. Things you had to do in English were done by the children. For instance, birth registration. People used to go to Japanese Association when a baby was born to report the name and the midwife. Then the secretary, who knew some English, would report it to the Recorder's Office. But, sometimes, he put the information in the drawer and forgot about it. There were many cases like that.

MRS. HIRASUNA: They didn't report mine. So I had to go to court right after Pearl Harbor. Since I didn't have my birth certificate, I had to establish my birth.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: At that time, people didn't know English. So the secretary of the Japanese Association had to do everything. Japanese characters have several pronunciations. Sometimes the secretary made a mistake, and the names weren't registered correctly. The secretary of the Japanese Association was there to help those who didn't know English too well.

MRS. TAIRA: A woman?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Usually a man.

MRS. INADA: Only men.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: That was a big association, the Japanese Association.

MRS. HIRASUNA: Prior to the war, I think the average age of the Nisei was 18. So at the time of the war, there weren't that many older Nisei who could lead people. So it was the Issei who were leaders. Dr. Yatabe, who was an older Nisei, was a leader among the Issei and Nisei.

MRS. TAIRA: What were unforgettable incidents before the war?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Evacuation was unforgettable for life. We were only given one week to pack.

MRS. TAIRA: Everybody?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Everybody gathered at the same place.

MRS. TAIRA: Where?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: The Assembly Center.

MRS. HIRASUNA: That was just city people, wasn't it?

MRS. INADA: Yes.

MRS. HIRASUNA: Because we didn't go to the Fairground.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: It's a different area.

MRS. INADA: It's a different residential area.

MRS. HIRASUNA: We were out of the city.

MRS. INADA: Then just the city of Fresno went to Fresno Assembly Center.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: If you were given one or two weeks to pack, you were lucky.

MRS. HIRASUNA: How many weeks were you in the Assembly Center?

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Months you mean. We were in July, August, September-- five or six months.

MRS. TAIRA: Dr. Taira and my husband and Dr. Hashiba moved in May.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: May 26th.

MRS. HIRASUNA: Oh, you went to Arkansas in September?

MRS. TAIRA: Yes. My husband and Dr. Taira went as an advance crew, and Michi Toshiyuki, the pharmacist, too.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: About 200 people went as an advance contingent.

MRS. HIRASUNA: We were evacuated in July.

MRS. TAIRA: What area?

MRS. HIRASUNA: We were supposed to go to Arizona. But our family got permission to go to Minnesota. We went by car.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Oh, but you weren't in camp.

MRS. HIRASUNA: No, we were supposed to go. But, finally, we got our permit to go to Minnesota a couple of days before. The rest of the area all had to go to Arizona next day or the day after.

MRS. INADA: Some of the people went to Idaho?

MRS. HIRASUNA: Yes.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: It depended on the district.

MRS. INADA: Those people went to Pinedale first, and then they went to Arizona.

MRS. TAIRA: People living in town all went to Arkansas.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Not all.

MRS. INADA: We went to the Assembly Center first and were divided into groups.

MRS. NAKAJIMA: Some went to Arkansas, Arizona, some got permits to go to the place they wanted to.

MRS. HIRASUNA: I had two brothers in Minnesota, and we had a place to go.

MRS. TAIRA: So the thing is you all had to leave California?

EVERYBODY: Yes.

MRS. HIRASUNA: They didn't let us go on Highway 99. We had to go to Nevada by going through Tioga Pass. We were up in the mountains. It was terrible.

MRS. TAIRA: I want to thank you all for sharing your memories of Fresno's Japanese community.